

THE BIRDS OF CHUDLEIGH PARISH

Collated by Dave Smallshire (updated 6 November 2023)

All known records, including those from the National Biodiversity Network Atlas (<https://nbnatlas.org/>) that can be allocated to the Parish, are summarised. Further updates will be produced as new information comes to hand. It does not necessarily represent all areas of the Parish equally and anyone who can add, correct or update this information is asked to send details to davesmall@btinternet.com.

Records of species that have occurred just outside the Parish boundary, or maybe just inside, are included in square brackets for context. The taxonomic sequence and scientific and vernacular names follow the official British List maintained by the British Ornithologists' Union (www.bou.org.uk/british-list/). To jump to a particular species, try using the 'Find' function (click the magnifying glass search icon, or use <Ctrl+F> on a desktop computer, and type in the species you want to look for).

[Black Grouse *Lyrurus tetrix*

A former resident at Haldon, although information is rather sketchy. Up to 11 were recorded in February 1882, one was killed by a car in 1944 and a female was seen in November 1991; the last was thought to have been released locally.]

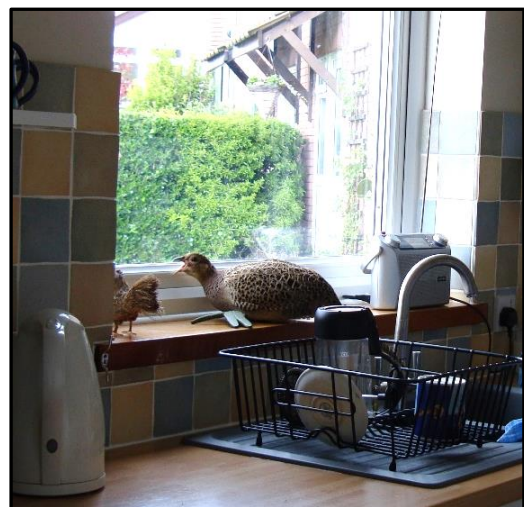
Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa*

An introduced species, populations west of the Exe Estuary being associated with game-rearing in mainly arable farmland. One on the road near Beggars Bush on 15/3/89, with two there on 20/3/89. Some have been released in the west of the Parish, wandering regularly to Deer Park Farm, where the species has bred in recent years and up to nine seen; sometimes comes feed at a bird table. One was discovered in an outbuilding at Parkway Mill in 2021 and two were seen near Ugbrooke on 25/4/2022. Together with two seen in a field just outside the Parish near Gappah on 18/4/20, this suggests that small numbers may be released at Ugbrooke.

Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

Large numbers are reared, released and shot at Ugbrooke Estate, and used to be released for shooting in the Whiteway estate.

Widespread around the fringes of the town, with groups often into double figures. During Covid-19 'lockdown walks', totals of 51 SW of Ugbrooke on 12/4/20, 92 around the south of the town on 18/4/20 and 67 in the Kerswell Cross area on 24/11/20. Sometimes wanders into town gardens; on 28/4/09 a female entered a house in Twindle Beer and sat on the kitchen window-sill!! (pictured)



[Golden Pheasant *Chrysolophus pictus*

A male on the road with Pheasants at Ugbrooke on 26/10/89; presumably reared and released there with Pheasants.]

[Lady Amherst's Pheasant *Chrysolophus amherstiae*

A male at the Ugbrooke entrance on 26/10/89 was not entirely typical may have been a hybrid with Golden Pheasant (belly/vent reddish with broad white band across lower breast; no yellow on back, only red rump); it had presumably been reared and released by Ugbrooke estate with Pheasants.]

Goose species *Anser/Branta sp.*

A skein of about 40 unidentified geese flew E very high over the town on 6/11/20.

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

An occasional non-breeding visitor, probably most regular at Ugbrooke lakes. Eleven flew south over the town on 4/4/88 and 13 on 2/9/91; one at Watercress Farm on 14 and 21/4/09; a pair at Harcombe lakes on 21/4/09; two at Watercress Farm on 5/4/20 and six there on 27/2/21; and 1-2 in flight over town on several dates spring 2020 and 2021.

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

One flew down the River Teign at Puttshills Wood late afternoon on 26 April 2023, behaviour suggestive of breeding locally.

Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata*

An increasing feral resident originating in the Far East that colonised wooded South Devon's rivers, ponds and lakes from 1981. Known since 2015 from the Bramble Brook at Deer Park Farm, with up to nine (six drakes) seen in March 2016 and a brood of two ducklings camera-trapped subsequently; there were two, perhaps four, broods in 2020. A pair were at the Kate Brook/River Teign confluence on 20/3/20, and upstream of here on 28/3 & 13/4/20, may also have bred in the Parish, as a pair with nine ducklings (plus an additional two drakes) were seen on the Teign near Chudleigh Knighton, just south of the Parish boundary, on 10-11/5/20. A male was seen in flight near Watercress Farm on 21/4/20. A pair frequented Kate Brook at Millstream Meadow on 6/4/22, at Parkway Mill on 3/5/22 and at Glen Cottage on 23/4 and 6/5 and 17/5/22, with male alone on 22/5/22.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

A common resident at standing and running waters. Large numbers are reared and released at Ugbrooke Park lakes, where at least 600 on 21/7/02, 260 on 12/11/07, 120 on 21/1/08, 45 on 5/4/08, 55 on 16/6/08 and 420+ on 10/12/20. Breeds along Bramble Brook at Deer Park Farm and in 2021 along Kate Brook at Glen Cottage. A pair were at a Twindle Beer garden pond, leaving an egg behind in the water, on 9/4/07; about 15 at Watercress Farm on 31/12/10 and 10/12/20 and 20 on 5/2/22; and up to seven were along the River Teign in spring 2020.

Pochard *Aythya ferina*

A scarce visitor. At Watercress Farm pools, 15 on 17/2/09 (after a hard spell in early February) and 12 there on 31/12/10.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

A scarce visitor. One at Ugbrooke Lake on 5/4/08 and a female there on 16/6/08; at Watercress Farm pools, reported in December 2004-February 2005, three on 16/3/08, 12 on 17/2/09 (after hard spell early in Feb) & on 31/12/10, two drakes on 15/2/21, a pair on 17/2/21 and 23/4/21, a female on 5/2/22 and six (four drakes) on 20/4/22.

Goosander *Mergus merganser*

A scarce fishing-eating duck that colonised Devon from 1980, breeding mainly on the upper, faster-flowing stretches of rivers, including the Teign. A pair flew up the River Teign from Chudleigh Knighton on 14/4/08; a male, two females and about six ducklings were seen on the River Teign in the summer of 2009; a pair circled the river near Puttshills Wood 10/4/20; a drake was in the river on 21/4/20 and a female 'scolding' at Putshills Wood on 26/4/23. Records outside the breeding season include three (two drakes) at Watercress Pools on 10/12/20, a pair on the Teign at Puttshills on 8/2/21, a pair flew over The Glen in early/3/21; three drakes flew upriver at Farley Mill on 19/3/21; a pair flew down the Teign Valley before heading over Finlake on 4/2/22; and four (possibly two pairs) flew up the Teign Valley on 11/2/22.

Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*

Haldon Forest is of national significance for this nocturnal summer visitor, which is typically present between late April and early September: 105 'churring' males were located (of 364 in Devon) in the national survey of 2004, although only a fraction of these were within Chudleigh Parish. Birds prefer heathland or recently-felled blocks,



currently including those in Haldon Plantation (Spicers Road) and Harcombe Plantation. A few pairs also breed at Ideford Common, most of which lies outside the Parish. It is likely that birds sometimes fly out to feed over farmland beyond heathland and young forestry. Exceptionally, one was found at 09:00 a.m. on 4/8/21 sitting on the roof of a New Exeter Street outhouse; the photographer (Roger Auster) had to stand in the bath and take photographs out of the bathroom window!

Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba*

Vagrant. One flew north-east over Twindle Beer on 10/4/88.

Swift *Apus apus*

A summer visitor, arriving promptly at breeding sites in late April or early May (earliest on 28/4/20) and departing usually by mid-August (rather late in 2020, with the last two remaining until the 18th; the latest record was one with Swallows on 26/8/17). Birds breed mainly under the eaves of old buildings, around the centre of town, with at least a dozen nest sites here in recent years. These include Chudleigh Town Hall, it was feared the colony would be lost following roof repairs; Chudleigh WILD erected two rows of artificial nestboxes here in 2018 and one on the back of

the Globe Inn. Despite this, four nests located were located in the roof space in 2019 and six nests in 2021, with up to 21 birds circling around). There is considerable scope to provide additional nest sites in Chudleigh for this declining species. Modern building tend to lack suitable access points for Swifts (and Starlings and House Sparrows), so it was heartening to see birds visiting and perhaps breeding in the apex of a fairly new house in Lower Trindle Close in 2020-21. Small groups screaming over the town are a characteristic of Chudleigh in the summer months, sometimes totalling more than 20 birds, with 40 in 2011 and 34 on 11/5/21.



Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

A rapidly declining summer visitor. A singing male was heard from the town on 8/5/89; a juvenile was seen with attendant Meadow Pipits at heathland in Harcombe Valley on 4/7/89; singles heard calling from town in 2001 and on 30/4/05; Combeshead Cross 2002; one (presumably a juvenile) along Oldway 6/8/06; heard regularly at Deer Park Farm up to 2005, less often to 2016, and again on 30/4/23; one sang briefly in heathland at Harcombe on 7/5/20.

Feral Pigeon *Columba livia*

Occasional 'lost' racing pigeons (including one from Northern Ireland) and true Feral Pigeons.

Stock Dove *Columba oenas*

A scarce resident. One or two singing birds noted at Puttshills Wood, The Glen, Chudleigh Rocks and Palace Quarry, with at least three at Ugbrooke Park. Nine around Riding Parks and ten around the south of the Parish in spring 2020. Small numbers are seen frequently flying over the town, with a flock of 16 on 18/2/22. At Hams Barton, 12 were in stubble on 8/9/21 and an exceptional 88 were in winter cereals on 5/2/22.

Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*

Very common throughout the Parish, including gardens and feeding stations. Birds in flight over town and country are one of the most frequent bird sights, especially during concerted migration of presumed Continental birds in early November. Counts of up to 49 during Covid-19 lockdown walks in spring 2020. An unseasonably late or early juvenile was seen in a town garden on 31/12/10 and 3/1/11. One ringed in a town garden was subsequently shot on Dartmoor.

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*

A rapidly declining species possibly heading extinction in Britain. A rare summer visitor, the county stronghold until recently being Haldon Forest (15 pairs in 2004 and seven pairs in 2007), but perhaps no longer present there. There were regular singing birds near Haldon Racecourse until 2014, at least, although none was heard within the Parish in 2020 (although one sang on 26 May 2021 in this area). Birds

have been seen occasionally taking road grit on the Haldon fringes (e.g. Beggar's Bush in 1990 and 1999, Waddon Brakes in 1992, Harcombe in 1994 and near Kerswell Cross (undated)) and at least two were near Amberley Farm on 5/6/03. Exceptionally, one was on wires with Collared Doves along Parkway Road on 26/5/96 and a juvenile was found in a Palace Meadow garden sometime in the 1990s.

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

A fairly common resident, especially near garden feeding stations, that first bred in Britain in 1955 and reached Devon in 1960. Several pairs breed in town gardens, often in cultivated conifers, but probably fewer in recent years. Counts of 18 in a town garden on 12/1/21 and up to six during Covid-19 lockdown walks in spring 2020. Able to breed all year round – e.g. family party of seven at a Twindle Beer feeder on 22/12/20.

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

An uncommon winter visitor to wetlands, easily overlooked. One was heard at Watercress Farm on 6/2/10 and another was seen there on 3/2/21; a less fortunate bird was found freshly dead at Hams Barton on 7/4/23.

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

A scarce breeding resident at ponds and lakes, including at Deer Park Farm (bred in 2016), Ugbrooke Park (up to ten seen), and Watercress Farm (up to six, breeding in at least 2022); one seen at Harcombe ponds on 21/4/09. Bred successfully on Kate Brook at Millstream Meadow in 2020, when singles were on the River Teign near Chudleigh Bridge on 30-31/3/20 and at Glen Cottage garden pond in October (most likely one of the Kate Brook birds). An adult and juvenile were at the latter pond in August 2021 and in May 2022 a pair hatched five chicks here, followed by a second brood later.

Coot *Fulica atra*

Small numbers noted at Ugbrooke Park, where there were 14, including three nests with eggs, on 5/4/08 and up to five have been seen at Watercress Farm, where breeding occurred in at least 2009.

Crane *Grus grus*

Vagrant. A family of four foraged in fodder crops at Lower Dunscombe Farm from about 12-28/2/06; earlier, the birds had been found feeding near Kenton and throughout their stay they flew to roost overnight at Exminster Marshes. (Image: Howard Bottrill, *Ecovisuals*.)



Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Scarce resident. Small numbers have been recorded at Ugbrooke Park and Watercress Farm throughout the year, with maxima of nine at Ugbrooke and five at

Watercress Farm in February 2009. Bred at Watercress Farm in at least 2022, when a small chick was being fed on 11/5/22.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Occasional visitor. One on Ugbrooke Lake on 20/8/18.

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Over Chudleigh town, two flew north during a very cold spell on 9/1/09 and another on 12/12/10. One seen at Deer Park Farm in 2014.

Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*

One heard calling over the town at night on 16/10/99 and one found freshly dead near Kerswell on 10/1/21.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

Migrant birds have occasionally been heard flying overhead. [A migrant bird was once seen on grass at Haldon Racecourse (the late Robin Khan, pers. comm.), but not definitely in the Parish.

Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*

A scarce winter visitor (November-February) to Haldon Forest and perhaps other woodland, where birds roost during the day and fly out to feed in surrounding grassland at night. Regularly seen in winter at Deer Park Farm, where up to 13 have been seen feeding in the hay meadows at night, using a spotlight or thermal imager, and up to eight found roosting during the day. A first-year bird ringed there on 9/2/20 was shot 3 km away in 'Chudleigh' on 2 January 2021, suggesting that this migrant had returned to its chosen wintering area. Also regularly seen at dusk at Beggars Bush, flying from daytime roosts in Haldon Forest towards Chudleigh town.

[**Jack Snipe** *Lymnocyptes minimus*

Occasionally seen in winter at a small pool (no longer present) on the Racecourse; it is uncertain whether this was in the Parish (the late Robin Khan, pers. comm.)]

Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

Scarce winter visitor. Two were flushed from pasture near Chudleigh Cricket Field on 27/1/08; three in flight over an Oldway field during snow in January 2010; and occasionally flushed from pond at Deer Park Farm.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Migrants overhead called at dusk on 23/9/96 and 28/7/02.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Migrant birds have occasionally been heard flying overhead.

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Seen surprisingly rarely, much less often than Herring Gull and typically in ones and twos, especially during hard weather.

Common Gull *Larus canus*

Scarce winter visitor. One seen on 9/2/91 during a cold spell.

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*

Scarce visitor. Singles seen overhead on 8/1/08, 4/5/20 and on three dates in March 2021.

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucooides*

An immature (first winter plumage) flew over the A38 north of the town on 25/1/07.

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

Regular all year on rooftops and especially flying over the town. A pair nested on the roof of a house off The Parade, probably in 2013: a large chick was seen walking along Coburg Crescent, followed by the adults; in September-October a fledged juvenile was food-begging around a regular pair of adults on rooftops in Beechwood Road (where the accompanying image was taken in 2020).



One or two pairs have bred on Chudleigh Primary School roof since 2017 (up to and including 2020). Every year (one or two?) chicks have fallen off the roof and flap around in the playground until replaced by the caretaker. Flocks of tens or even hundreds frequently pass over and are seen resting or feeding in grassland and ploughed fields; 450 flew NNE over the town on 4/1/21. Most birds are thought to roost overnight at the coast.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

Scarce migrant. Small numbers are seen occasionally overhead, in fields or at Ugbrooke Lake, mainly on spring and autumn migration and especially in March-April. An adult over the town on 25/6/19 was unseasonal.

Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*

A grounded juvenile in the afternoon of 14/9/08 was found and identified by Jo Pope and Ollie Cook (pictured with the bird) in St Mary's Close; it was released later in the day from Teignmouth Pier. Disoriented, fully-grown juveniles sometimes leave their nest burrows on west coast islands and head inland instead of towards the South Atlantic Ocean!



White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

Vagrant. One circled over the town on 19 September 2005 (M. R. Hughes).

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Probably regular along the River Teign and at larger open waters. Singles in flight over the town on 21/10/87, 15/11/87, 15/5/88, 21/4/93, 9/7/05, 17 & 18/4/20, 1/7/20

and 6/11/20, and near Kerswell on 31/5/20. [One fishing on the River Teign just S of the Parish boundary on 11/5/20.]

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Probably a regular visitor to flowing and standing waters, including rural and town garden ponds. Singles in flight over the town on 4/4/88, 7/5/88, 15/6/20 and 13/10/20; at Ugbrooke Park on 21/7/02; and briefly at a Twindle Beer garden pond on 11/11/90, 15/2/91, 6/4/08 and 19/9/20.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

A rare visitor. Reported from SX8679 (the monad containing most of Chudleigh town) on 9/7/05; one flew down to the little stream in 'Rocklands valley' on the edge of town during a cold spell on 23/12/10; one seen by the River Teign in December 2014; and one flew over the town on 10/2/21.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

A rare migrant. One flew east over Beggars Bush, Haldon, on 13/9/93. [Other migrants have also been recorded irregularly outside the Parish over Haldon.]

Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

A rare, summer migrant breeder to Britain. A small breeding population (maximum two pairs) of this rare summer migrant was present in Haldon Forest during 1979-95. Birds sometimes frequented the northern parts of the Parish, and bred at Harcombe in a beech tree in 1993(?) and in a pine tree in Harcombe Valley in 1995 (one young fledged). The only recent record concerns one, presumably a migrant, over Lawn Gardens on 30/5/20 (Keith Benyon-Tinker).

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Scarce breeding resident, with several breeding pairs. A regular sight around the Parish and town. Often seen at feeding stations, where prey has included Collared Dove, House Sparrows and Starlings. An adult male died after hitting a window in Twindle Beer on 16/4/20.

Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

A rare resident in Haldon Forest, the Teign Valley and elsewhere in mature woodland. Adult and young birds have been seen regularly along Bramble Brook during August-October. Singles over Riding Parks on 30/3/19, 6/11/20 and 9/2/22, over Lawn Gardens on 30/5/20 and 10/12/20 and two over the Teign Valley on 6/11/20. On 9/1/21, a juvenile female was camera-trapped (image from Fraser Rush) having caught a Pheasant at Deer Park Farm! On 15/2/21, a male flew from Lyneham Wood NE over the Teign Valley to Puttshills Wood and back; a pair displayed over the Teign Valley on 6/3/21; and a male displayed there on 4/2/22. One, probably a female, was over Wadden on 9/3/21. (Also,



unconfirmed sightings around Chudleigh on 17/7/88, 18/4/20 and 16-17/3/21.) [Two separate males soared over the western slopes of the lower Teign Valley on 18/2/21; a male near Gappah on 16/3/21.] Seen displaying at Deer Park Farm in spring 2022.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

Passage birds, presumed to be non-breeding immatures from elsewhere in Britain, have been seen flying over on rare occasions, mostly in recent years, with an exceptional eight records in 2020. Over the town, singles were seen on 18/6/17, 28/5/20 and 25/6/20, with two on 10/5/20. Singles flew north up the Teign Valley on 14/5/20, quartered Higher Dunscombe Farm fields on 20/5/20 and 19/6/20 and flew north high over the A38 on 23/6/20; one was seen twice in December between the town and Ugbrooke; one moved SW over Harcombe Valley on 28/5/22 and next day one circled over The Glen before moving off NE.

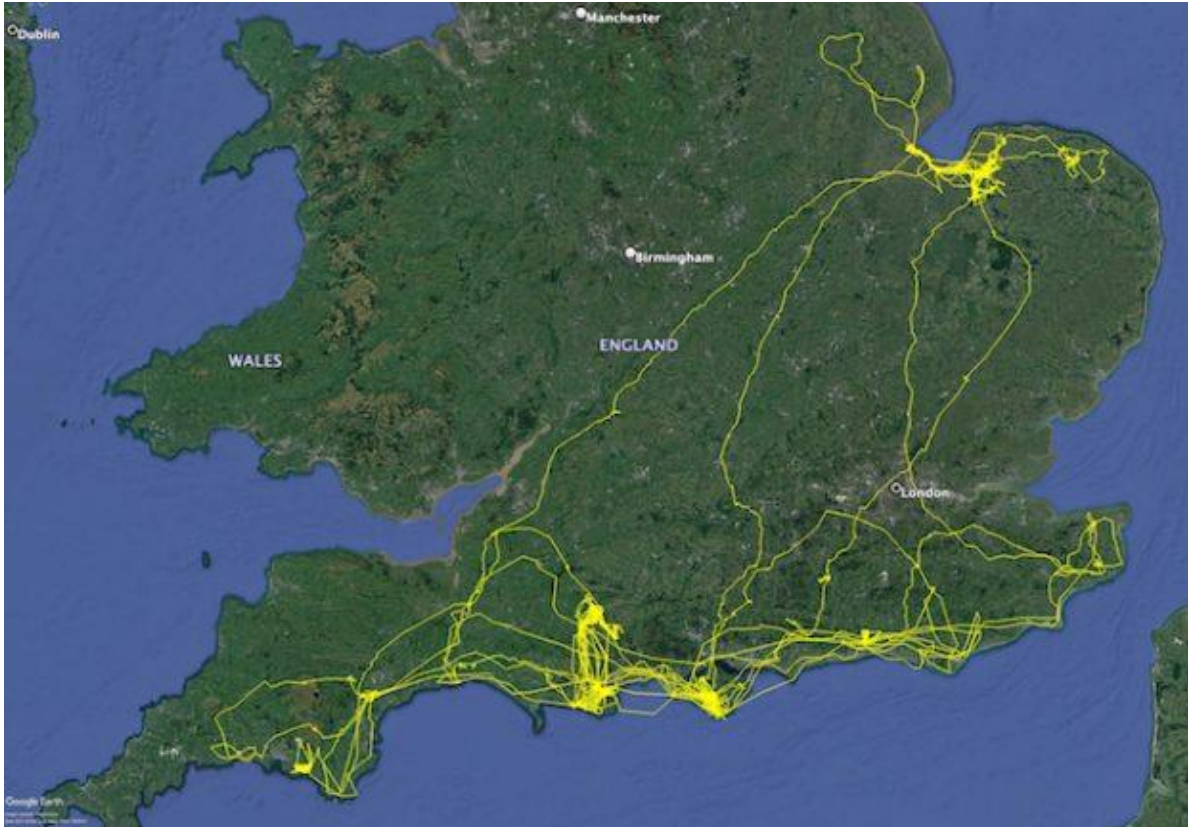
Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

Vagrant. One flew NW low over New Exeter Street on 10/9/07.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

A radio-tracked male (known as 'G461'), released as a juvenile on the Isle of Wight in 2020 (the second year of releases there), spent a fortnight touring south-east England in October, then later in the winter headed south-west. Although not seen by anyone, it flew through Chudleigh airspace on 8/2/21: it arrived from Dorset and at 11:01 was 763m above sea level over Exeter Racecourse, being next located near Prawle Point an hour later. A direct route – quite feasible for such a huge bird – would have taken it over Harcombe, Wadden and Ugbrooke, but at a height that would probably have made it invisible to the human eye. After spending nearly a month in the South Hams, it returned on 7/3/21, flying directly over Chudleigh to roost overnight in a wood 7 km south-west of Exeter; next morning it flew on into Somerset and on 27/3/21 it was in Kent. After spending two months exploring the South Coast, G461 flew north to West Norfolk in late April 2021, later returning south in September and settling in Dorset, especially the Poole Harbour area.

Sadly, G461 was found dead in Dorset on 27/1/22. Post mortem and toxicology testing subsequently identified brodifacoum poisoning as the cause of death. Brodifacoum is a highly toxic anticoagulant rodenticide that causes internal haemorrhaging. The satellite data indicates that the eagle, which was otherwise healthy, deteriorated and died over a period of several days. Brodifacoum poses a serious threat to birds of prey, as it accumulates in the food chain. Brodifacoum has been illegally misused in some instances to target birds of prey.



G461's movements after release on the Isle of Wight in 2020



G461 in full glory (Ainsley Bennett Photography)

Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Several breeding pairs. A regular sight around the Parish, including over the town. Most prominent in spring and autumn, with at least 12 on 8/10/94 and 15-20 on

10/3/96. One came into a garden on the edge of town during a cold spell on 27/12/10.

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

Probably a very scarce resident. Singles were reported in SX8679 (the monad including most of Chudleigh town) on 8/1/88; along the A380 in 8/88; flushed off a dead rat near Ugbrooke on 31/8/88; in SX8981 (the monad including Harcombe lakes) on 22/9/89; near Crocombe Bridge on 21/1/97 and 23/11/20; Harcombe Cross in 2000; Palace Meadow (seen and heard occasionally); on a gate at Oldway Batfields DWT Reserve after a Chudleigh WILD bat event on 29/8/18; in 2019 at Deer Park Farm; and hunting in daylight at Chudleighwoods Farm on 12/2/21.

Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*

A scarce resident heard widely around the Parish, especially in autumn. Mostly associated with mature woodland, including well-wooded gardens. Three pairs probably breed at Deer Park Farm. One mobbed by a Jay and Blackbirds in an Oldway field hedgerow on 2/10/09.

[Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*

Recorded at Haldon Racecourse on occasions by the late Robin Khan, but not necessarily in the Parish.]

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

One photographed on 19 September 2021 near the Cricket Field (Helen Baron).

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

A scarce resident, most often seen (and sometimes breeding) along the River Teign, Bramble Brook (bred at Deer Park Farm in 2016) and Kate Brook. Also turns up at ponds and lakes, even in gardens occasionally.

Wryneck

Rare migrant. One found killed by a cat in Woodway Street, early September 1993.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dryobates minor*

Has become rare in Devon in recent years, as in the rest of Britain. The only known Parish record is of one at Deer Park Farm in 2000.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*

A widespread, though rather scarce, resident in woodlands, hedgerows and sometimes gardens. Sometimes comes to garden feeders. About three pairs at Deer Park Farm.

Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*

A scarce (but declining?) resident, regular sites including Deer Park Farm (about three pairs), Ugbrooke Park and Harcombe Valley. May visit town garden lawns, especially dispersing juveniles looking for ants.

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

A few pairs breed, or least used to, at sites including Palace Quarry (e.g. 1988-9), Hams Barton (e.g. 2010) and at or close to Deer Park Farm (young seen in most recent years). A male was still at Palace Quarry on 5/4/08 and two circled over the

town on 14/3/09. Singles over woods at Milestone Cross on 3/4/20 and near Amberley on 1/4/21. Has become very scarce in the Parish in recent years.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

A juvenile was seen briefly in a fir tree in Lawn Gardens on 29/8/21.

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

A rare summer visitor, probably breeding in the Parish. Singles are seen occasionally during May-August, including over the town chasing Swallows and House Martins and especially in July-August when feeding young.

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*

Rare resident. One of less than 100 pairs in Devon, a pair bred in Palace Quarry in 1993 (probably transferring temporarily from a Teign Valley site) and then in most years since 2000, fledging up to four young in most years, sometimes using an old Raven's nest. Frequently seen flying around the Parish and often over the town, especially the noisy, newly-fledged juveniles in July. On 16/8/93, a juvenile sat for a while on a garden swing in Twindle Beer (the accompanying image of a juvenile was taken in 2019 over there). In 2012, the female of the pair fell to the ground in April with three wing fractures and was taken into care. This appears to have been the result of a fight with her daughter from the previous year's brood, who later went on to breed with the male. The chicks have been fitted (under licence) with blue colour rings in recent years; four chicks were ringed on 26/5/21. Birds have been seen chasing domestic or feral pigeons on several occasions; prey taken includes Collared Dove and Starling.



[Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

Although there are no published records for the Parish, several migrants have been recorded at Haldon Racecourse, where the species apparently used to breed (the late Robin Khan, pers. comm.). It seems likely that this summer visitor once bred in blocks of Haldon heathland, including those within the Parish.]

[Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*

A rare winter visitor to Haldon, once recorded at the Racecourse, though not necessarily in the Parish.]

Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

A scarce resident, seen or heard occasionally, including in gardens. About three pairs at Deer Park Farm. Typically more conspicuous in autumn when collecting and caching acorns.

Magpie *Pica pica*

Widespread in small numbers, including in town gardens. About three pairs at Deer Park Farm.

Jackdaw *Coloeus monedula*

Breeds in clefts at Palace Quarry and Chudleigh Rocks, especially at the former. Small numbers also breed in buildings (the species often nests in chimneys), for example in the town centre at the Phoenix, and it might also breed in holes in old trees. Outside the breeding season, noisy flocks of 50-100 can be seen over the town and Palace Quarry on breezy, sunny days, or foraging in the surrounding fields.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

Not known to breed in the Parish until 2021, when five nests were built in the top of a large oak tree in town at Coburg Crescent; four nests subsequently showed signs of success; five nests were occupied in 2022, with young fledging in May, and 11 nests in 2023. [The next nearest rookery is just across the Teign Valley.] Counts of feeding birds include 91 in the Beggar's Bush/Wadden area on 6/12/08; 170 at Brimley Stile, where muck had been spread over a grass field, on 17/2/09; and 350 with Jackdaws and Stock Doves at Hams Barton on 5/2/22. Occasionally seen flying over the town, including a flock of c50 on 28/12/20.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*

A common resident. Pairs or family groups are frequently seen. About three pairs at Deer Park Farm. Unusually, 28 were seen together in an arable field near Hams Barton on 24/11/20.

Raven *Corvus corax*

Breeds in Palace Quarry (e.g. adults feeding 3 chicks in nest on 29/4/92 and also 7/5/00). On occasions in the past, young were hand-reared and taken to supplement the captive Ravens at the Tower of London. In 2019, a pair bred in a tree off Fore Street close to the town centre, and it is likely that pairs breed in tall trees elsewhere in the Parish (e.g. Ugbrooke and Haldon Forest). Ones and twos frequently heard and seen over the town, with four on 7/1/90 and 30/3/97, and five were seen over Ugbrooke Park on 21/7/02.

Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus*

A rare and erratic winter visitor. During an exceptional irruption in the winter of 2010/11, three were seen in a Rowan tree in Great Hill on 4/12/10 and one flew over Twindle Beer calling on 18/12/10; in March 2013 a party of 16 appeared in a garden in Rock Road. A flock of 30-35 fed on berries near the edge of town one winter (prior to 2019).

Coal Tit *Periparus ater*

A fairly common resident, mainly in mixed woodland and especially conifer plantations. Usually found in small numbers where conifers are present, including in gardens (often at feeders), with larger numbers in Haldon Forest plantations. Three-four pairs at Deer Park Farm.

Marsh Tit *Poecile palustris*

A scarce and probably declining resident in mature deciduous woodland. Locations include Deer Park Farm (1-3 pairs, comes to feeders), Harcombe Valley, Puttshills Wood and Riding Parks. Rare in town gardens, but has been seen at feeders.

Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

A very common and widespread resident; often at garden feeders. Counts of up to 26 during Covid-19 'lockdown' walks around southern parts of town, in spring 2020.

Great Tit *Parus major*

A common and widespread resident; often at garden feeders. Counts of up to 17 during Covid-19 'lockdown' walks around southern parts of town, in spring 2020.

Woodlark *Lullula arborea*

A former rare resident and occasional migrant. One or two pairs resident and breeding at Park Farm 1997-2013, singing birds in January-March 2015 and May 2016, but not since. Small numbers have bred for many years in the Teign Valley, part of a small breeding population associated with farmland in South Devon (elsewhere most breed in heathland or young forestry plantations). Two migrants flew over Twindle Beer to the south-west on 1/11/07 during calm, sunny and unseasonably warm weather.

Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

A very scarce breeding resident; also a regular autumn migrant overhead and occasional hard-weather movements. Song heard at Combeshead Cross in 2001 and in recent years small numbers have been singing in hayfields at Deer Park Farm (three breeding pairs in 2014-16), in arable fields between Kerswell and Brimley (3 singing on 9/5/21), over grassland in the north-eastern edge of the Parish and at Haldon Racecourse; also just outside the Parish at Gappah and Ideford Common. Diurnal migration is regularly noted overhead on fine autumn days.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

A scarce summer visitor, breeding in the banks of the River Teign at Teigngrace, but only occasionally seen upriver in the Parish (e.g. two on 5/4/08). Probably frequent in spring-summer over Ugbrooke Lake, where 14 present on 5/4/08, and reported at Harcombe in June-July 1989.

Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

A widespread summer visitor from April to October. The earliest record is of two on 28/3/89, but first arrivals are typically during 4-10 April. Groups include several dozen on 11/9/88 and 15 at Ugbrooke Park 21/7/02. At least 250 flew NE in 15 minutes following the passage of a warm front on 8/10/12.

House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

A summer visitor from mid-April (earliest 7/4/23) to October (latest five on 31/10/87), breeding widely under the eaves of buildings. Typically dozens can be seen flying over the town during summer. Twenty at Ugbrooke Park (where nesting) on 21/7/02. At least 350 flew NE in 15 minutes following the passage of warm front on 8/10/12.

Long-tailed tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

A common resident in woodland, scrub and hedgerows. Frequent in gardens, often in passing family groups, and may come to feeders (especially fat balls). About six breeding pairs at Deer Park Farm.

Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

Probably a formerly rare summer migrant that has declined rapidly in Devon in recent years. Believed to have bred on the Haldon fringes, typically near large Beech trees.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Formerly a fairly common summer visitor, but numbers much reduced in recent decades and now mainly restricted as a breeding bird to deciduous scrub in Haldon Forest. Formerly about a dozen pairs at Deer Park Farm, but has declined and only single migrants seen in 2014 and 2016. At least 10 singing birds were located in open areas of Haldon in April-May 2020 (four at Haldon Plantation and six in Harcombe Plantation/Valley). More frequent on migration, especially in August, when birds may appear in gardens (the pictured juvenile bird was initially stunned after hitting a window on 19/7/10).



Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

A common summer visitor. Unlike Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff has increased as a breeding summer visitor in recent decades, with counts of up to nine during Covid-19 'lockdown' walks in spring 2020 and 15 singing on 9/5/21. Present from March (earliest 1/3/14) to October (latest 26/10/19). Occasional early spring and late summer migrants appear in gardens, often singing; grounded migrants were especially noticeable during inclement weather in late March 2013, when unusually birds foraged at ground level around gardens, and in late March-early April 2021. Around 20 breeding pairs at Deer Park Farm. Rare in winter, although seen at the sewage treatment works and occasionally in a Palace Meadow garden, with singles in a Twindle Beer garden on 15/1/17 and 26/2/18 and at Glen Cottage on 1/2/21.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

An occasional migrant. A juvenile seen in a Twindle Beer garden, calling and remarkably giving sub-song, on 6/9/07.

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Scarce summer visitor. One seen at Watercress Farm on 13/5/10.

Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*

Scarce summer visitor. One sang from brambles in the Oldway Batfields SUDS field on 2/5/20. [Breeds in some of the young plantations in Haldon Forest.]

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

Has increased in recent decades as a breeding summer migrant (late March to September/October) to woodland and scrub. Up to 15 singing birds counted in Covid-19 'lockdown' walks around the south of the town in 2020 and 10 singing on 9/5/21. 15-20 breeding pairs at Deer Park Farm, where some birds ringed are heavy from a diet of fruit from trees. One fed on a rotting pear in a Twindle Beer garden on 18/10/20 (pictured). Has also increased as a winter visitor (November to March) to gardens, where small numbers from the Continent are attracted to berries, fat balls and sunflower hearts. Wintering birds sometimes sing, suggesting that they form feeding territories.



Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*

A very scarce summer visitor. Singles sang in Palace Quarry on 10/5/92 and in Oldway scrub and a Twindle Beer garden on 20/5/89, 10/5/92 and in mid-May 1998.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*

A scarce summer visitor. One sang in Oldway fields and a Twindle Beer garden on 6-31/5/88, 11/5-4/7/89, 5-7/5/90, 4/5/92 and 25-26/6/94. One sang at Deer Park Farm in 2015 and 2016 and near Old Kate Bridge on 9/5/21.

Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

A scarce summer visitor, breeding in heathland parts of Haldon Forest and in dense herbage along hedgerows elsewhere. About a dozen breeding pairs at Deer Park Farm in earlier years reduced to two-four pairs in 2014-16 and one or two pairs since. One singing in hedgerows at Hams Barton and Brimley Corner in spring 2020 and two singing there on 9/5/21, with another inside the Parish at Haldon Racecourse. A juvenile was caught in a mist-net before dark at the Chudleigh Wild bat event in Oldway Batfields on 26/8/21.

Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*

A rare and secretive resident in heathland areas at Haldon Forest and Ideford Common, at least when populations are not depressed as a result of cold weather. A pair were seen just inside the Parish boundary at Ideford Common on 6/11/23.

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*

Rare winter visitor and recent colonist. One seen in a town garden on 28/12/17 and 6/1/18; an adult male was ringed at Deer Park Farm on 7/12/19 (and seen twice subsequently that winter); two were seen near Biddlecombe Cross on 2/12/20; and One was reported at Watercress Farm in early/1/21. In 2020, a surprising 12-14 singing males, of which 8-10 were in the Parish, were discovered in southern blocks of Haldon Forest during April-June, mainly in blocks of old Sitka Spruce. These included 4-6 in Haldon Plantation (Spicers Road area – all in the Parish); 7-9 in Harcombe Valley (3 in the Parish) and 1 in the Parish near Beggars Bush. Breeding

birds are hard to locate unless singing, so playback was used to stimulate the Haldon birds into action. Checks of Haldon sites in January-early March failed to find any birds (and hardly any Goldcrests), apart from one singing at Harcombe Plantation on 25/3/21.

Playback again stimulated a male in Riding Parks to sing and display on 9 & 11/3/21, with two or possibly three singing there between 14/3/21

and 9/5/21; one responded on 5/2/22 and three on 8/2/22; three (a pair and a male) there on 20/4/22 and two or three (two singing) on 23/4/22; in 2023, there were three (singing male at Winslow Cottages and a pair further along the ridge road) on 2/5/23.



Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

Fairly common resident. Most frequent in Haldon Forest conifer plantations, with counts of up to 13 birds there and up to five around southern parts of Chudleigh during Covid-19 'lockdown' walks in spring 2020. Four-five pairs at Deer Park Farm in 2015-16, but only two-three in 2014 after hard winters. Sometimes visits gardens, especially outside the breeding season (when more widespread), and may breed if tall conifers are present. An influx, perhaps containing Continental birds, is sometimes apparent in autumn.

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

A common and widespread resident, with counts of up to ten during 'lockdown' walks in spring 2020.

Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*

A scarce resident in mature, broad-leaved woodland, sometimes coming to garden feeders. Typical sites include Puttshills Wood and Riding Parks and 6-7 pairs at Deer Park Farm. Bred in a knot-hole in an Oak tree on the edge of Oldway Batfields Reserve in 2020, when up to four were noted during Covid-19 'lockdown' walks around the southern part of town.

Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*

A scarce resident in broad-leaved woodland, sometimes in mixed and coniferous woodland. Occasionally wanders into gardens, especially with parties of tits. At least three pairs at Deer Park Farm.

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

A common resident and winter visitor, though numbers are lower than formerly. Some of the reduction in population result from the loss of suitable breeding sites in house roofs, as wood has been replaced by plastic. Away from buildings, breeding is likely in holes in tree and perhaps rock faces. Feeding flocks of up to about 30 are frequent in both town and countryside, typically in areas of short grass where

invertebrates such as crane-fly larvae (leatherjackets) can be collected; this food is often sought in garden lawns and fed to chicks in spring. Fledglings join adults in small flocks from mid-May onwards, but winter numbers are boosted by Continental immigrants. A feeding flock around Oldway/Twindle Beer totalled 185 on 27/10/20, with 92 there on 1/9/21 and 104 on 6/12/21.

[Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus*

Occasional migrants have appeared at Haldon Racecourse in late March, including in 2014 (the late Robin Khan, pers. comm.).]

Blackbird *Turdus merula*

A common resident and winter visitor. Up to 25 were counted during covid-19 'lockdown' walks around the southern parts of the town and up to 11 in the Haldon fringes in spring 2020. Numbers increase in winter with Continental immigrants, with concentrations in gardens during hard weather.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

A scarce winter visitor to pastures and hedgerows, especially in hard weather, when they sometimes come into gardens. During the infamous 'Beast from the East' cold spell in early March 2018, up to 70 sheltered and fed on apples in a garden in Twindle Beer (pictured) and 100 ditto in Woodway Street. In desperation, a bird once took Holly berries from a Christmas wreath on a front door in Palace Meadow! Migrants are sometimes seen overhead in late autumn and during hard weather. Parties totalling more than 100 flew north-east on 6/11/20. Ten fed in well-grazed horse pasture at Kersell on 5/2/22. Up to 30 regular at Deer Park Farm, where ringing has shown some degree of site fidelity, with two birds returning in the winter following capture.



Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

A fairly common winter visitor (October to March/April) to pastures, hedgerows and woodlands. Nocturnal migrants are often heard and diurnal movements are sometimes seen overhead in late autumn, including 100 flying north on 29/10/88, 100 flying south-east on 12/10/96 and flocks flying north or north-east totalled over 100 on 21/11/10 and 230 on 6/11/20; flocks totalling 100 flew NNE on 5/11/21. Up to 35 have been seen in Oldway fields (as late as 10/4/13); 46 were in the Beggar's Bush/Wadden area on 6/12/08; and up to 50 regular at Deer Park Farm. Birds may move into gardens during hard weather, with a maximum of 40 in Woodway Street on 2/3/18.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

A fairly common resident, but much scarcer than Blackbird. Up to eight were recorded during Covid-19 'lockdown' walks around the south of the town and up to 5 in the Haldon Forest fringes in spring 2020. Small groups may congregate in gardens and orchards during hard weather and compete with other thrushes for fruit.

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*

A scarce but widespread resident, typically seen in singles, pairs or family groups. Sometimes comes into gardens, especially during hard weather. Favours areas of short turf and berry-bearing bushes. Three-four pairs at Deer Park Farm, where exceptionally up to 40 have been seen in July. One sang whilst in flight over Chudleigh Glen on 22/11/20, a rare occurrence.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

Formerly more common, but now a very scarce summer visitor. Used to breed on the farmhouse at Deer Park Farm, but now nests elsewhere, including in 2023. Singles in town gardens on 4/9/91 and 5/6/05, and an adult feeding a juvenile in woodland near Biddlecombe on 1/8/20. One at Glen Cottage on 16-22/5/22.

Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

Common and widespread resident and winter visitor, with counts of 24 in the Harcombe area on 25/11/08 and up to 17 around south of the town and 11 on Haldon Forest fringes during Covid-19 'lockdown' walks in spring 2020.

Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*

A rare summer visitor. One sang in Palace Quarry in 1993 and 1994. Nightingale was formerly a summer visitor to the Bovey Basin, including Chudleigh Knighton Heath up to 1993 and Heathfield up to 1994, but the species no longer breeds in Devon.

Pied Flycatcher

Reported from Harcombe valley during the summers of 1988-90 and 1993.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

A rare migrant. Singles seen in and around gardens in Twindle Beer on 28/10/89, 10/10/00, 2/4/13, 19/11/20 (first winter male, pictured) and 29/3/21.



Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

A rare summer migrant. Occasional migrants are seen at Deer Park Farm and a female was seen in a town garden on 4/4/19.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*

A rare migrant, seen very occasionally at Deer Park Farm (e.g. one in 2015). [A migrant bird at the Racecourse on 16/5/14 may not have been in the Parish.]

Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*

A scarce resident, with small numbers breeding in heathland areas of Haldon Forest, where at least some remain all year. These include parts of Haldon Plantation (Spicers Road, where bred in 2020) and both sides of Harcombe Valley (breeding at least in 1988, 1999 and 2020). Up to five pairs have bred at Haldon Racecourse, only the southern tip of which lies in the Parish. Also breeds at Ideford Common, most of which lies outside the Parish. A few are seen away from heathland outside

the breeding season, including a one at Exeter Road allotments in 2003 and two near Kerswell on 24/11/20 and in mid/1/21, with one on 18/3/21; seen only rarely at Deer Park Farm.

Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

A scarce summer visitor/migrant. Bred in a rabbit burrow at Haldon Racecourse sometime prior to 2014 (but not necessarily in the Parish). A party of presumed Greenland race migrants were at the Racecourse on 16/5/14 and a tired female (pictured), also presumed to be of this race, rested on bungalow rooftops in Twindle Beer on 4/5/20. Other migrants seen frequently in spring and autumn at Deer Park Farm (up to six);



elsewhere singles in Twindle Beer on a roof and in gardens on 15/8/00; on a lawn on 9/10/15 and a male was flycatching from a roof on 29/4/23.

Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*

A scarce breeding resident along the River Teign (two pairs), Bramble Brook (one-two pairs at Deer Park Farm) and Kate Brook (at least one pair, as far upstream as Parkway Mill). During spates at Kate Brook in 2021, one sought refuge at a garden pond where it dived for food; in May it was seen feeding a juvenile there.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Common in and near to town and around the more isolated buildings. Found especially near feeding stations and dense bushes, and where suitable nest-sites can be found in buildings. Like Starling, Swift and bats, this species has suffered nest-site losses due to the widespread roof 'improvements', with plastic replacing wood. Up to ten pairs breed in nest-boxes in Palace Meadow and about 8-12 pairs breed at Deer Park Farm, but only in the last ten years or so (since straw has been brought in to feed cattle wintered in sheds). Feeding flocks of up to 30 have been seen around town, and counts of up to 29 made during Covid-19 'lockdown' walks in spring 2020.

Dunnock *Prunella modularis*

A fairly common and widespread resident, with counts of up to seven during 'lockdown' walks in spring 2020.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

A very scarce migrant, with singles calling over the town on 25/8/90, Puttshills Wood on 2/9/90 and Oldway on 15/9/20.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

A few scattered breeding pairs in summer, especially along the River Teign and Kate Brook, although surprisingly scarce along Bramble Brook. More widespread in winter, when often around buildings, especially those with flat roofs, as well as watercourses, and may visit garden ponds. Some migrant birds are noted overhead, especially in autumn, with an exceptional party of ten flying east on 10/9/00.

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

A fairly common resident and winter visitor. Scattered breeding pairs in summer, more widespread in winter; often around buildings and watercourses, sometimes in gardens.

[Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi* and **Tawny Pipit** *Anthus campestris*

Both of these rare vagrants were recorded in autumn in flocks of Meadow Pipits at Haldon Racecourse by the late Robin Khan, but not necessarily in the Parish.]

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

A regular winter visitor to grassland and overhead migrant, especially in autumn. Counts include 23 in the Ugbrooke area on 12/11/07. Up to 50 regular in winter at Deer Park Farm, with up to about 200 caught and ringed over two days one autumn. Occasionally ventures into town gardens in hard weather. [Possibly breeds at Ideford Common, most of which lies outside the Parish.]

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*

A scarce summer visitor to clear-felled blocks and heathland patches in Haldon Forest, where occasional trees provide song posts. Sites include Haldon Plantation (Spicers Road area in 2020), Harcombe Valley (1994 and 2020) and Haldon Racecourse (2021). Also breeds at Ideford Common, most of which lies outside the Parish; one sang within the Parish on 15/4/22. Migrants are occasionally heard overhead in early autumn, such as one over the town on 1/9/90.

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Formerly a common and widespread breeding bird and winter visitor, including to gardens (especially in hard weather), but numbers have been much reduced in recent years. Forty counted in the Beggar's Bush/Wadden area on 6/12/08. In spring 2020 Covid-19 'lockdown walks', counts of up to five singing around the southern parts of town and up to four around Haldon Forest fringes; 10 were counted there on 9/5/21. A flock of 21 fed on seeds on the edge of the Oaks development on 31/12/21.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

A scarce and erratic winter visitor, occasionally visiting garden feeding stations, mainly in hard weather. About 20 with 100 Chaffinches under some of Haldon's roadside Beeches along Old Exeter Road on 23/12/95. Seen in a Twindle Beer garden in five winters since 2006, typically taking white sunflower hearts, between late November and mid-April.

Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

A scarce resident, with occasional pairs scattered in broad-leaved woodland, scrub and hedgerows across the Parish, including Oldway Batfields Reserve. Three-five pairs at Deer Park Farm, with up to eight at feeders. Sometimes comes to town garden feeding stations. Occasional evidence of migration, with two flying high to the north on 15/10/14 and an exceptional group of nine flying high to the east over town on 15/10/00.

Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*

Formerly a fairly common resident, including to gardens (especially in hard weather), but numbers have been much reduced in recent years. A total of 42 were counted in the Beggar's Bush/Wadden area on 6/12/08. Up to three pairs at Deer Park Farm in recent years. Only a few scattered pairs were noted around town in 2020-23.

Linnet *Linaria cannabina*

A scarce resident, mainly at heathland blocks in Haldon Forest, where a few pairs breed. Possibly breeds in gorse at Deer Park Farm, with occasional small flocks in winter. Occasionally seen in farmland or heard flying over town. Seen in Woodway Street in 2003. About ten were at Haldon Racecourse on 17/5/14, though not all were inside the Parish, and at least two in the Parish on 9/5/21. At least 6 were at Brimley on 9/5/21. [Also breeds outside the Parish at Ideford Common.]

Lesser Redpoll *Acanthis cabaret*

A scarce resident in Haldon Forest [and Ideford Common, most of which lies outside the Parish], where a few pairs breed in birch and willow scrub. Only rarely heard calling in flight over the town, although in recent years there have been a few visits to garden feeders, where (like the bird pictured) they take sunflower hearts.



Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*

A scarce and erratic, but increasing, visitor, to conifers in Haldon Forest, more abundant and breeding in some (perhaps most?) years, but scarce in others. Within the Parish, there were 20, mostly males and with several singing, at Beggar's Bush on 17/4/94 and widespread sightings in spring 2020, including at Harcombe Plantation (two), Beggars Bush (45+ on 27/4/20) and Haldon Plantation (five). One flew over the town on 30/6/11 and four on 7/10/20. Also in town, an exceptional record of small flock in a dead elm tree in a Palace Meadow garden on one occasion in the 1990s, ten flying over there in November 2020 and four over on 7 October 2023. About 20 near Ideford Common on 18/2/21 and one at Harcombe Plantation on 9/5/21.

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

A common and widespread resident that has increased substantially in recent years as a result of food provided in gardens, notably Nyger seed and sunflower hearts. It is now widespread in town and countryside, with 5-8 breeding pairs at Deer Park Farm, up to 30 coming to feeders in town gardens and up to 22 counted in Covid-19 'lockdown' walks in spring 2020.

Siskin *Spinus spinus*

A fairly common breeder and winter visitor. Although still somewhat erratic in numbers, Siskin has increased and become a fairly common breeder in Haldon Forest plantations. It also apparently breeds more widely, including around town, where it has also become more frequent at garden feeders, taking Nyger and more

recently white sunflower seeds. A total of 17 was counted in Harcombe Valley (not all in the Parish) on 12/5/20; the winters of 2019/20 and 2020/21 were particularly good for the species. A flock of 90 fed in alders at Watercress Pools on 10/12/20 and 21 counted in the Parish on 9/5/21. Up to 4 juveniles seen at sunflower feeders in Twindle Beer in May 2021 and up to seven regularly during the summer; nine were together there on 16/3/22. A ringed bird from the Isles of Scilly was caught in a Palace Meadow garden; ringing recoveries from Devon indicate that many of our wintering Siskins come from Scotland.



[Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

A flock was recorded once in winter at Haldon Racecourse, though not necessarily in the Parish (the late Robin Khan, pers. comm.). One fed along a path at Ideford Common on 27-28/11/21.]

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*

A much scarcer resident than formerly, occurring mostly in hedgerows in the north-east of the Parish; present at Deer Park Farm prior to 2000. With a paucity of suitable arable crops in the Parish, birds now seem to favour areas where horses or chickens are kept, probably taking their seed; for example, seven were around chicken pens near Harcombe Garage on 21/4/09. One sang in 2020-21 in cereal crops at Garden Spot Lane and 3 by cereals and horses between Brimley and Kerswell. Four (pre-roost gathering) at Harcombe (east) heath late on 31/12/20. One near the Highwaymans Haunt on 15/2/21, at least two near Kerswell on 17/2/21 and at Haldon Racecourse on 9/5/21. Very rarely comes into gardens in bad weather, e.g. two records in 33 years in Twindle Beer; males in two town gardens during snow on 2/3/18; and a female one on 24/1/21. [May breed at Gappah, where up to 21 in 2020-21, and Ideford Common, most of which lies outside the Parish.]

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*

This rare species is virtually restricted in Britain to South Devon. A pair has been present in or near the west of the Parish, with up to five (suggesting successful breeding) seen at Deer Park Farm/Ruggadon during 2017-22 (part of a tiny population in the Teign Valley). Recently also reported at Riddon, on the south-west fringe of town near Great Hill and in the Garden Spot Lane area, including a pair (male singing) along a hedge c100m east of the Mount Pleasant allotments on 5/5/21 and one singing at or near Parkway Mill in 2022 and 2023. [Close to the Parish, a pair were at Gappah in March 2021 and one in 2023]. Although it can survive in urban fringes if provided with barley seed in winter, the scarcity of arable in the Parish, especially spring barley crops with winter stubbles, is a constraint.

Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

A female visited a town garden on 2/3/18 during heavy snow. [Has bred in wet areas of Haldon Racecourse, but not necessarily in the Parish.]